

(Washington, D.C.) – **U.S. Representative Chet Edwards** today voted for S. 1983, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, which passed the U.S. House 419 to 0. The bill will reform and improve veterans' health services by supporting wounded veterans and their families and caregivers, expanding care for female veterans, improving mental health services, and increasing access to health care for veterans in rural areas.

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The bill is supported by a broad coalition of veterans groups including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Wounded Warriors Project and the National Military Family Association.

Congressman Edwards, Chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee said, *“We can never fully repay our servicemen and women, their families, and our veterans who have sacrificed so much in defense of our nation, but we have a moral obligation to provide them the health care and benefits they have earned. This bill sends a clear message to America’s veterans that we deeply respect their service and sacrifice, and ensures that we can address their changing medical needs.”*

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To address the unique needs of the growing number of returning women soldiers, this bill will improve health services for almost 2 million female veterans. With this legislation, the VA will be able to provide care for female veterans' newborns for the first time in history. It will also improve access to care for veterans in rural areas, ensure that the VA can better treat veterans suffering from mental health issues, and provide the VA with resources to learn more about the tragically high suicide rate among veterans. This legislation will also support family members and caregivers who look after our injured veterans to bring them the relief they deserve.

The bill passed today builds on a record of accomplishments for veterans and troops over the

last three years – including the new G.I. Bill to provide returning troops with the promise of a college education; historic investments in veterans' health care and providing that funding one year in advance to prevent political or legislative delays; expanding economic opportunities for returning soldiers and improving care for those with PTSD. **Since becoming Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee, Congressman Edwards has authored legislation that has increased VA health care and benefits by 60 percent, and resulted in a total increase of 8,300 claims processors, 145 community-based outpatient clinics, 70 Vet Centers, and more than 47,000 additional Veterans Health Administration employees.**

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"We have made historic investments to improve veterans' health care and benefits, and improve quality of life for our military families, and our work continues with this bill," **said Edwards.**

The bill will next be considered in the U.S. Senate.